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THE BIBLICAL WORLD

CONTINUING

The Old and New Testament Student

JANUARY, 1893

Does any one doubt the existence of problems on every side? Is any one so blind as not to see that in the various realms of action and of thought that which is problematic prevails most widely? In a close analysis one may fairly question whether there is anything which is not more or less problematic. Is it not true that to live and be living is only less a problem than to be dying or dead? In life, therefore, and in death the unsolved presents itself. That which is dark grows at times more light to some, but, after all, it is rather a question of the degree of darkness that has been removed, than of the degree of light which has been attained.

To one who may entertain views savoring of a pessimistic character, the existence of these problems of every kind, affecting every line of thought and every principle of action, becomes a terrible reality which staggers faith and makes life itself a period of misery. To him who is more hopefully inclined, and who is able to see the light that exists, even from the midst of darkness, or to him whose inner eye has gained a glimpse of light beyond and above the darkness, there is, to be sure, none of this black despair; and yet, in so far as such a one thinks, his thought is a struggle. Indeed, all thought is struggle, for in thinking man wrestles with the influences, good and bad, by

which he is surrounded, and, alas, in too many cases the thinker, or he who honestly tries to think, is throttled by the grasp of superstition or stifled in the atmosphere of ignorance.

WHENCE come these problems that so beset us? Are they the vain imagination of men's minds, or do they find their existence in the very nature of things? Too frequently they are regarded as the invention of those who state and try to solve them; upon the mind which is sensitive enough to appreciate and formulate them we lay the responsibility of their existence. But while it is true that each man is responsible for what he thinks, it is God alone who has suggested the problems which excite thought. The world of revelation, broad and bright and great as it is, is filled with uncertainties. Many things which from the human point of view might have been settled have been left open. Indefiniteness characterizes many a subject concerning which we might have expected definiteness. In the world of nature this condition of things is even more clearly seen and more widely acknowledged. The same thing holds true in all lines of human activity—for example, in letters and politics. Here, as elsewhere, our lives, if we live, our thoughts, if we think, must be devoted to the consideration of problems.

To many minds these problems are the more serious in proportion as they are more closely connected with one's conception of God, and their serious character is still more clearly appreciated as we contemplate them, and discover that in God himself and in his plans they have their origin. It is he who, in one form or another, presents them; and the man who does not give them his attention, so far as his ability permits, who does not look into them with the opportunities at his command, and try to solve them, is guilty of the greatest sin which he can commit, either against himself or against God.

Is NOT the purpose of this condition of things clear? These problems have been given us in order that by the contemplation of them we may rise from the level of the brute to the great height occupied by the heavenly intelligences and by God him-

self. Dealing with them is a means of advancement. It is this work, which, beyond all other work, uplifts humanity. This was the crowning work of the great Teacher, who furnished in his life and in his words, the basal principles for the solution of all questions. The problems of his time were the problems of all times, and in him we find at once the explanation and the purpose, the key for the solution of these difficulties and the inspiration to undertake the work of solution.

It is true that these problems, and here we may limit ourselves to the problems of religious life and theological thought, bring real distress of mind,—perhaps even skepticism, to the minds of some. From one point of view they accomplish no end of mischief. Hearts seem to be broken, faiths shattered, by the questionings which these problems produce. Whatever we may say in explanation of all this, the fact remains that in many cases simply because of having undertaken some consideration of these things, men lose or fancy themselves to lose a something which was theirs before, and which up to this time had served, at any rate, as a substitute for the real religious spirit. But such cases are after all comparatively few and their existence only proves the truth of all that has been said.

To think is not to doubt continuously and forever, but only long enough to allow that which had been doubted to be shown to be the veriest truth and therefore to be forever accepted, or to be error and therefore to be rejected. Misuse of that which is given us to use is next to non-use of the same, the greatest sin, and one wonders which of these sins is the predominant one. When men learn properly to use that which is set before them, this misuse which prevails so widely will cease, and then with clear insight and with greater probability of success, these problems will be handled.

WHAT now shall be our attitude? Does any one suppose that so long as men live the solution of these problems will not be attempted? Just as their existence is a part of the very nature of things, the attempt to solve them is also an inseparable part

of the constitution of man's nature. The greatest work given to humanity to do and the work which will most quickly lift it is the outreaching towards that which is above; in other words, a grappling with these mysterious things in every part of man's environment. That man who searches most intently, whose mind is most difficult to satisfy, is the man in whom there is the most of the divine. He is more or less a brute who is not ready to grapple with them.

IT WAS the policy of that other journal, the predecessor of THE BIBLICAL WORLD, during the ten years of its existence, to present, and, so far as possible, to discuss the questions which stood closely related to that Book, which furnishes the foundation of our faith. Difficulties were not sought for; nor, when forced upon the attention, were they magnified. On the other hand, they were neither ignored nor underrated. An effort was made to state them, when necessary, with frankness and fairness; to meet them, when possible, with firmness and the truth. Such will be the policy of THE BIBLICAL WORLD. Its work is to build up, by any and every legitimate method, a true conception of the "Word." In order to build that which will stand, close attention must be paid to the foundations on which the building shall rest. Rubbish of any kind will, sooner or later, inevitably bring trouble.

The new journal takes up the work where the old journal laid it down. If the old friends will continue with us and give the sympathy and support so freely accorded in the past, we may confidently promise, with the new facilities at command, to render efficient aid in the work of making known in all their multi-forms the great truths which have brought and are bringing light to the world.